

Aspire Education Project Community Reading Buddies 2015 Outcomes



Overview:

Community Reading Buddies (CRB) 2015 was robustly executed, with triple the skill-building hours in Oakland as in any previous year. The program achieved the following:

- Reached 121 PreK-3rd grade "Buddies" from six classrooms in Oakland's Child Development Centers
- Engaged 141 Teen Mentors, representing over 45 East Bay middle and high schools
- Provided 845 90-minute mentoring sessions of 90 minutes each (27 hours per Buddy)ⁱ
- Provided 44 days of service (June 15 to August 7th, minus holidays)
- Delivered over 2650 hours of one-on-one and small group work on literacy and school readiness skill-buildingⁱⁱ
- Hosted three family-engagement events with 54 families and 141 individuals reached
- Provided 236 developmentally and culturally appropriate books to participating families

The program was generously supported by the following sources:

- Kenneth Rainin Foundation: \$10,000
- Rogers Family Foundation: \$8,000

- Private donations: \$4,435
- Aspire contribution from tutoring program surplus: \$2,315
- In kind donations:
 - The Calsoyas Group (monitoring and evaluation): \$4,800
 - Arizmendi Collective (Family Engagement meals): \$200

Program Cost: \$24,750 (\$22,500 in direct program costs + 10% indirect costs)

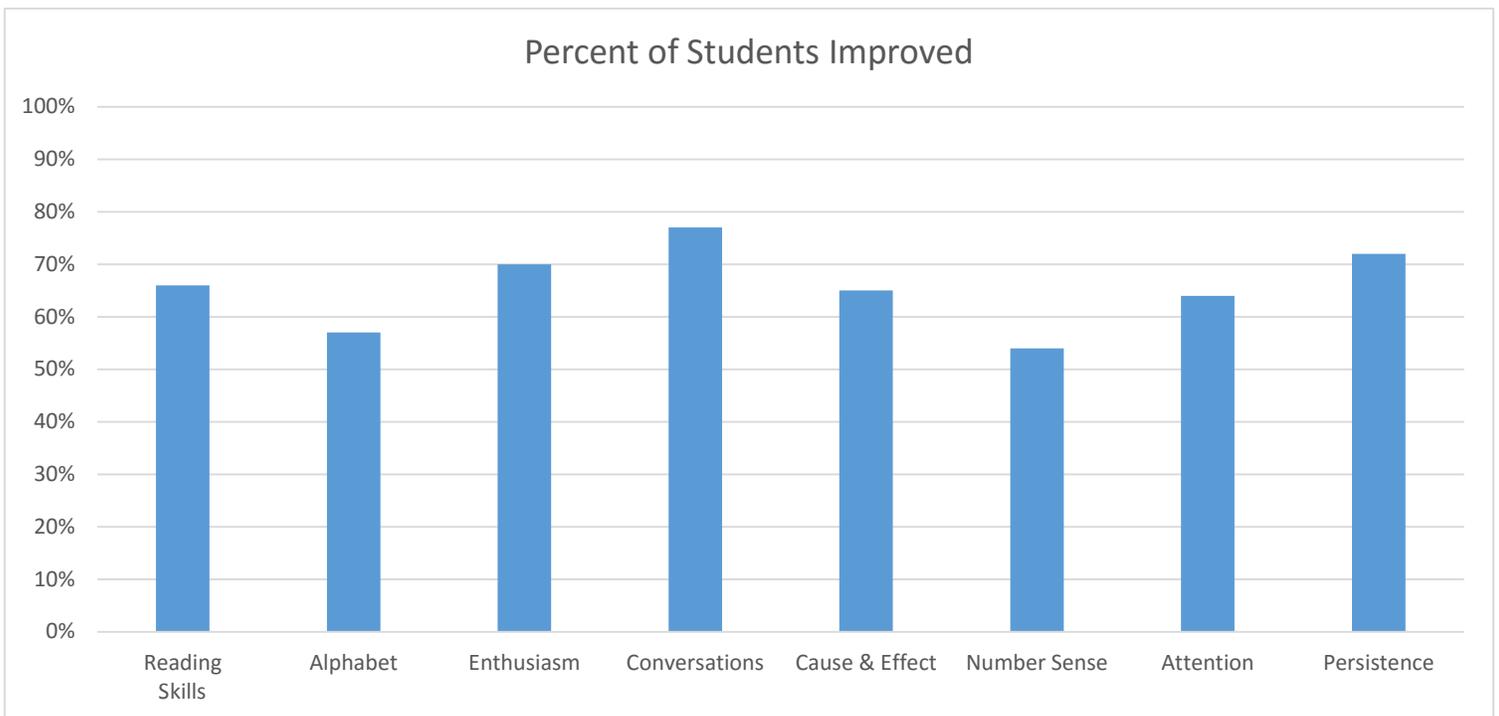
Buddy Progress

Progress was measured using individual start and end surveys of children, their teachers, and their parent surveys, as well as a classroom evaluation by an independent observer.ⁱⁱⁱ

The surveys were modeled closely on the Desired Developmental Results Profile, created by the California Department of Education and used by partner Child Development Centers to measure early learning outcomes.

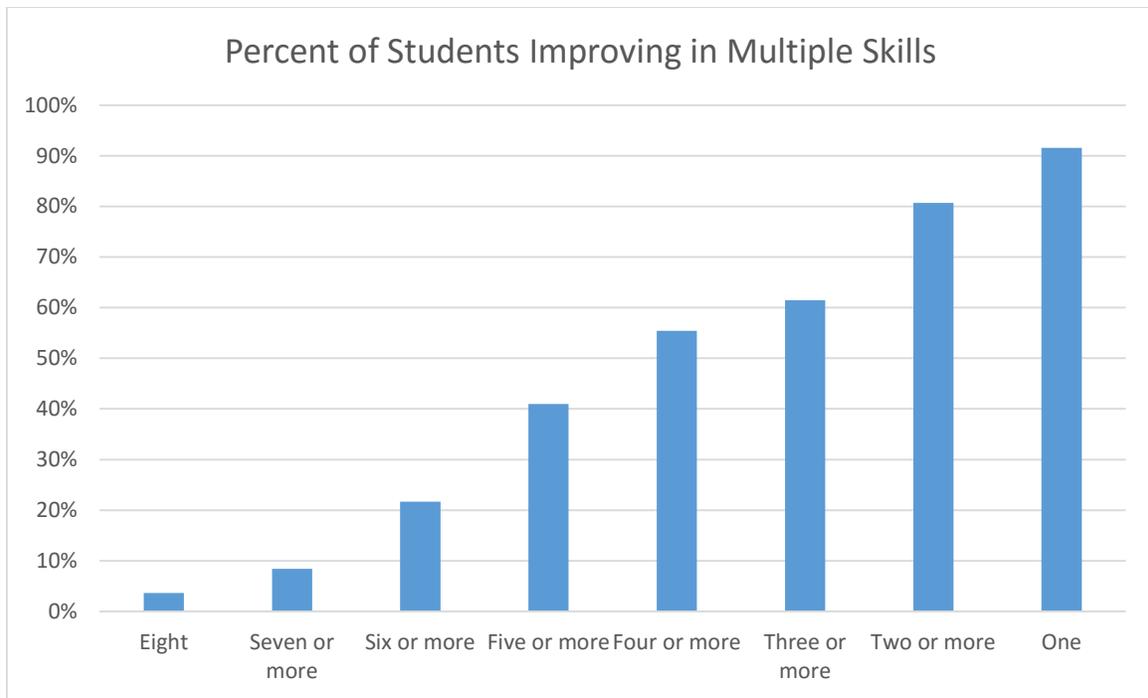
Skills Improved

As shown on the graph below, the Buddies improved in all eight areas measured over the course of their interactions with the Teen Mentors.



80% of Buddies improved in multiple areas

Most Buddies showed measurable improvement in skills over the course of the sessions; 92% improved, and 80% of buddies showed improvement in at least two areas.



Additional Perspectives^{iv}

Outside Observers

The Calsoyas Group donated time to collect observation-based data on the program. The observers circulated in the classrooms listening to individual three- to five-minute snapshots of Mentor-Buddy interactions and took running record notes.^v The notes were then coded as either supporting, neutral or not supporting the facets of classroom culture correlated to positive student results.^{vi}

1. **Caring** about students (Encouragement and Support)
2. **Captivating** students (Learning Seems Interesting and Relevant)
3. **Conferring** with students (Students Sense their Ideas are Respected)
4. **Controlling** behavior (Culture of Cooperation and Peer Support)
5. **Clarifying** lessons (Success Seems Feasible)
6. **Challenging** students (Press for Effort, Perseverance and Rigor)
7. **Consolidating** knowledge (Ideas get Connected and Integrated)

Over the course of the observations, 80% of the interactions positively supported at least four of the elements. The interactions deemed not supportive of the elements were due to buddies being distracted by the peers or not being fully on task (insufficient behavior management). The elements represented the most strongly were: Caring, Captivating, Conferring and Controlling, representing eighty-five percent of the recording instances of active support. Consolidating, which is probably the most difficult element for mentors to learn to foster, was the least represented with no positive instances.

We consider these to be excellent results for mentor-buddy interactions. The ambiance of the CRB program is lively, engaged and sometimes jubilantly boisterous, so an 80% rate of on task behavior,

which is on a par or better than many traditional classroom environments, demonstrates that both mentors and buddies take the sessions seriously.

Teachers' Feedback

The Calsoyas Group also surveyed and debriefed the teachers in several classrooms. The responses were filled with praise and appreciation of the program. The teachers articulated the benefits that CRB brought to their classroom and students, both through the direct contact and activities with mentors as well as by providing an important platform and context for building and expanding on their own classroom activities beyond CRB. Some of the benefits of CRB they expressed in the debriefs include:

- Providing a real world context inside the classroom for practicing ELA skills during interaction with the teens (back and forth conversations)
- Fostering a classroom culture of interest and enthusiasm around literacy
- Developing skills in building relationships and socializing
- Exposure to great role modeling: teen mentors demonstrated politeness, kindness, enthusiasm for reading, book and school
- Teachers deliberately used CRB as a reference point during their own classroom teaching because students enjoyed the program and felt connected to it.

Families' Feedback

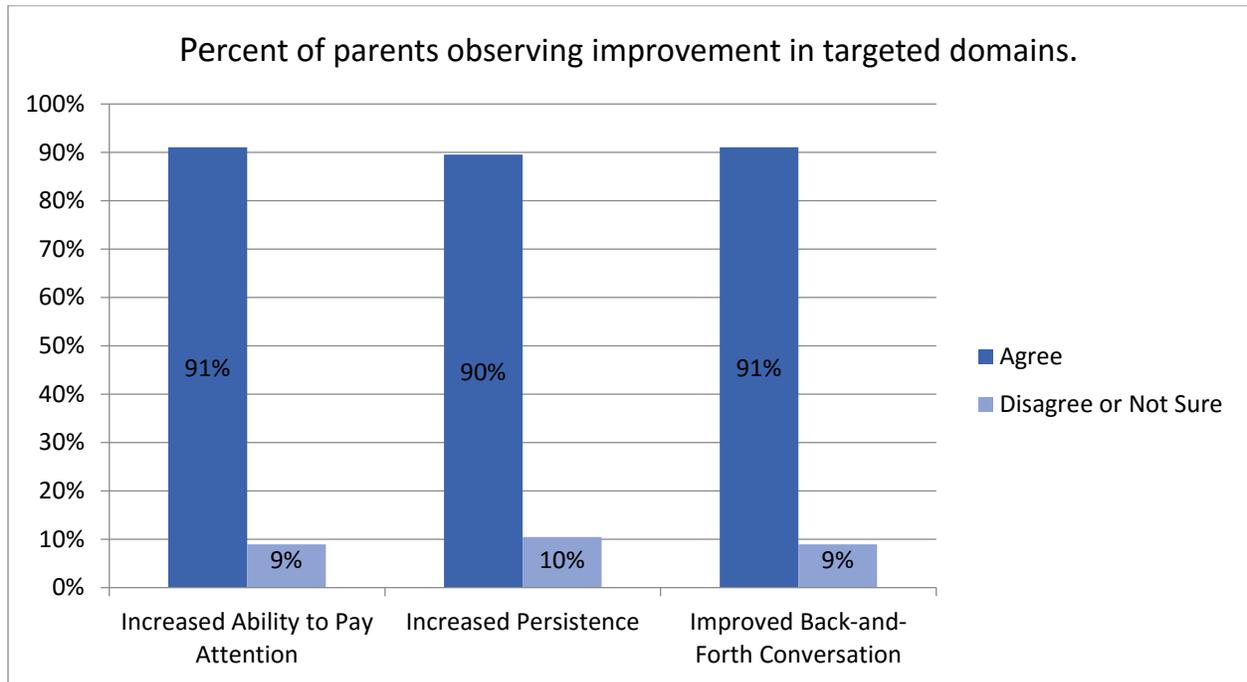
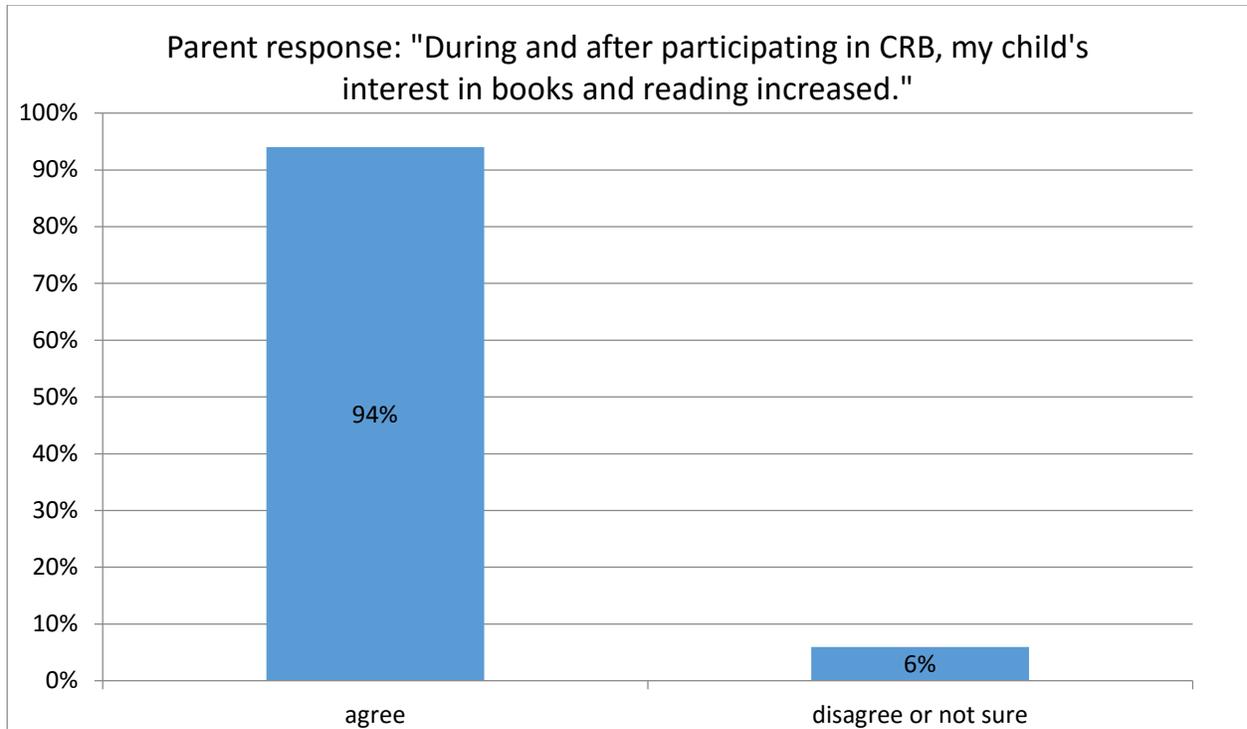
Our work starts in the classroom, but its greatest effects play out at home, as families to continue to build on their students' enthusiasm for reading and growing literacy skills. To foster this connection, CRB incorporated a robust family engagement component, including special events, communications to parents, and book distribution. Every participating family took home age and culturally appropriate literature.

To measure our effect, we surveyed parents at the close of the program, asking them to share their impressions of CRB's impact. Ninety percent or more reported improvement in each of the following key literacy and social-emotional domains:

- Interest in books and reading
- Ability to pay attention to people, things and surroundings
- Persistence in attempting to complete challenging activities
- Likelihood to participate in back-and-forth communications and extended conversation

It has been positively excellent because he looks forward to seeing his Reading Buddy every week, and he knows what Thursday means – he never wants to miss a Thursday at school. He already had a love for books... but this has helped to improve and totally enhance. He's more into reading on his own, whereas before he always wanted you to read to him. Now he takes initiative with books.

-Preschool Parent, Emerson Child Development Center



Mentors Benefited as Well

Teen mentors responded to a detailed survey regarding their experience with CRB at the end of their last session. The data show that they found the program to be both useful and fun. Though the results

were strong in all survey areas, we think we can continue to enrich the teen experience by better connecting them to their peers and offering more opportunities for peer to peer leadership.

Survey Question	Net Positives ^{vii}
My CRB experience made me grow as a person.	89%
My CRB experience met or exceeded my expectations.	95%
My buddy had fun and was enthusiastic about the activities we did together.	90%
CRB was as fun or more fun than I expected.	89%
CRB was as challenging or more challenging that I expected.	59%
CRB made me a more competent leader among my peers.	61%
CRB made me a more competent leader among my peers (Lead Mentors Only)	86%
If I were eligible, I would apply to do CRB next year.	84%
I would recommend CRB to a friend as a summer activity.	91%

As a mentor working with preschoolers I watched as all the other mentors around me become more experienced and comfortable working with the kids. One moment during week 7, I stopped and looked around the room, and realized that everyone around me was reading. It was truly gratifying.

-Laura Li, Lead Mentor

ⁱ There were 456 logged sessions, but not all mentors logged the number of session a buddy had on exit forms. Extrapolating from averages and using attendance data, we estimate the total number of sessions at 845.

ⁱⁱ 845 sessions of 90 minutes each equals 1267.5 hours. However, working from PreK-3rd attendance data to account for small group work (two "Buddies" with one "Teen Mentor,") and adding in hours from our three Family Reading Night events, we arrive at a minimum of 2,650 instructional hours delivered.

ⁱⁱⁱ We measured improvement in eight key competencies using a tool closely aligned to the 2015 Desired Results Developmental Profile, by having Mentors assess Buddies when they began working with students, and at the end of their volunteer time. Because Buddies generally had several mentors over the course of the program, the start and end assessments were not administered by the same Mentor. Rankings were consistent however, indicating validity of the survey instrument; seventy-five percent of Buddies had ratings that either improved 1-2 points on the seven-point Likert scale over the summer or remained at the same level.

^{iv} Full disclosure, Aleka Calsoyas, the Managing Partner of The Calsoyas Group, was a co-founder of Aspire Education Project. She no longer participates in the operations or governance of Aspire Education Project, but holds an Emeritus role on the Board. The volunteer who conducted the observations was not a Calsoyas Group Employee, but is a PhD student in Education at Mills and is WASC certified observer. See note below for more on the tools.

^v The tools were aligned to the "Seven C's" of the Tripod Student Surveys analyzed by the Gates Foundation-funded MET Study (Measures of Effective Teaching) and to the DRDP 2015, the Developmental Continuum from Early Infancy to Kindergarten Entry, used by CRB to evaluate student progress. This alignment is created by "cross walking" evidence in the DRDP Developmental Domain SED, competency 3 "Relationships and Social Interactions with Familiar Adults" with the "Seven C's" and CRB mentor training materials. Specific, CRB appropriate examples have been adapted directly from the mentor training materials and are aligned to program expectations.

^{vi} The volunteer who conducted the observations was not a Calsoyas Group Employee, but is a PhD student in Education at Mills and is WASC certified observer. She used the observation tool and protocol designed by Calsoyas Group Staff.